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Judge George M. Thomson,
Chairman,
Ad-Hoc Committee on
Environmental Sensitivity Disorders,
Provincial Court (Family Division)
311 Jarvis Street,
Toronto, Ontario.
M5B 2C4

Dear Judge Thomson:

In the past few months several people with food and chemical sensitivities have contacted my office for assistance.

*A four-year-old Sudbury boy weighed only 24 pounds when he was admitted to Sick Children's Hospital with severe food sensitivities. OHIP refuses to pay for the costly food supplement needed to keep him alive.

*A Capreol woman is so sensitive to chemicals that leaving her home has caused her to fall into unconsciousness. Despite letters from her doctor, it took almost a year of fighting before the Ministry of Community and Social Serivces agreed to allow a disability pension.

*A Queen's law student was forced to quit school because of incapacitating attacks of trigeminal neuralgia, fatigue and headaches. His doctor found him to be sensitive to formaldehyde, chlorine, auto exhaust, newsprint, natural gas and many foods. OHIP will not pay for the tests that determined

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these sensitivities. Nor will it pay for the things necessary to remove these chemicals from his environment - air purifiers, pesticide-free foods, etc. He is slowly recovering, but only because his parents paid several thousand dollars to create what amounts to a private hospital setting.

Despite the differences in these cases, there is only one thing they have in common. All have suffered physically and financially because their health needs are not being met through the Ontario Health Insurance Plan.

I understand there is debate within the medical profession about the scientific explanation for this illness and over the methods of diagnosis and treatment. One group of doctors is having some success with new methods. The other groups is openly criticizing these new methods, but offers no alternative relief for the patients.

When people with health problems are excluded from the health care system because of debates within the medical profession, the government is obliged to step in and help resolve the debate to the benefit of the patients. Instead this government seems to have accepted the opinion of only one side of this debate - the side which allows the government to do nothing. I find it strange that the government and the Ministry of Community and Social Services in particular would have as a medical advisor someone who does not accept the medical problem. Consequently it is the people suffering from the health difficulties who must deal with the problem and their families pay all related expenses as the government has found this is the least expensive way of having to provide assistance.

The scientific explanation of this illness matters little to the patients. All they know is that the symptoms are tragically real and the only diagnosis and treatment that have been helpful are not covered by our universal health care system.

The need for research in this matter is urgent, but patients should not have to suffer physically or financially while this research is being done.

I urge you, Judge Thomson, to make the following recommendations to the Ministry of Health.

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1. The Ministry of Health should move immediately to establish a research project or to provide research grants for studies in this area.

2. The Ministry of Health must immediately change the OHIP schedule to ensure the diagnostic tests done by doctors practising clinical ecology are fully covered.

3. The government must provide, either through the Ministry of Health or the Ministry of Community and Social Services, special diet allowances so these patients can obtain the chemical-free food they need to survive.

4. The government should consider providing funds to help these patients adapt their homes to their special needs.

Your consideration of the above proposals is appreciated.

Sincerely,

Elie W. Martel, MPP

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c. Hon. Alan Pope, Q.C.
Minister of Health.

Hon. Robert Elgie, Q.C.
Minister of Community and
Social Services.